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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

MY QUARTER CENTURY OF AMERICAN POLITICS. By Champ Clark. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Genial humanity and wisdom, shrewd and kindly observation of men and affairs—these are the outstanding qualities of Champ Clark's reminiscences. The wisdom varies in comprehensiveness and in degree of illumination; the humanity is constant, and here lies the greater wisdom—in the attitude toward life. If one looks in vain for political profundities in these volumes one may be grateful for the absence of political cynicisms and political hypocrisies, and one finds the narrative rich in estimates, intuitive and practical, of real men—even if, as a critic, one shudders at the dictum that *The Pleasures of Hope* is "the finest long poem in our vernacular" or detects a certain surplusage of enthusiasm in the statement that "to the end of time men will read with interest, and women with tears, *Lucile* and *Eugene Aram*."

The books that influenced Champ Clark most were the Bible, Wirt's *Life of Patrick Henry*, and a very small red book containing the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, and Washington's Farewell Address. Of this last book, his father said to him: "I want you to read this book. Next to the Bible it is the best one I know of."

What an education certain men got in those days when some few things were considered great and essential! Nowadays, when Greek is scarcely any longer considered even a feather in a man's cap, it may be well to call passing attention to the fact that Champ Clark received a grade of 100 in Greek from that fastidious professor, Dr. John H. Neville. Dr. William Benjamin Smith, now professor emeritus of astronomy at Tulane University, and on the Carnegie Foundation, got the same grade. In 1870, it was clear to all the students of Transylvania University that highest honors at graduation the next year lay between John O. Hopkins (subsequently professor of Greek in Butler University) and Champ Clark. Clark and Hopkins figured out their averages together, and the latter, finding that Clark was ahead of him by one per cent, decided to drop back a year, thus making sure of a distinction that would be of use to him in the profession he intended to engage in. Meanwhile, Clark was expelled because of a shooting affray which, though it would appear somewhat unconventional, to say the least, to modern collegians, had no relish or wickedness in it. The result was that first honors went to James Lane Allen the novelist.

Clark graduated from Bethany College, with the highest honors, in 1873, and shortly afterward, at the age of twenty-three, became president of Marshall College, West Virginia.

After one year of service, at the not princely salary of thirteen hundred dollars a year, Mr. Clark, declining re-election to the presidency of Marshall College, entered the Cincinnati Law School, from which he was graduated, at the head of his class, in 1875. For a time he taught school in the city of Louisiana, Missouri, in which place he hung out his lawyer's shingle in July, 1876. He became successively city attorney of the two cities of Louisiana and Bowling Green, presidential elector, member of the legislature, permanent chairman of the St. Louis Democratic National Convention of 1904, Representative in Congress, and Speaker of the House. The country has not forgotten how near he came to obtaining the Presidential nomination in the Democratic National Convention of 1912.

The career thus briefly outlined was rich in experience rather than striking in achievement. A fighting spirit, honesty of purpose, a certain breadth of mind, and a quick grasping of opportunity seem to explain it adequately. About his achievements, indeed, Mr. Clark makes no great ado. He does not even adhere closely to the chronological in his narration: he digresses freely, inserts anecdotes out of the expected sequence, interposes chapters upon some of the notable figures of his time, or upon such subjects as "Wit and Humor in Congress," "Cloak Room Stories," "Heredity in American Politics." He has written not an oration *De Corona* in the guise of reminiscences, but a book of mellow and remarkably impartial recollections, simply truth-telling and racily self-expressive. As chatty as Justin McCarthy, Mr. Clark makes few sweeping pronouncements or elaborate analyses, but tells the substance of his own life and of the events in which he was concerned with a frankness which reveals everything in the light of decent moral standards and of practical judgment. A young man desiring to know what political life is like, what its standards are, what mental and moral qualities are required in it, might profit more by the reading of this book than by any formal course of study in a university. Such a reader would receive unquestionably not only the right ideas, but the right spirit as well. The book is Champ Clark's own story, and seldom is so much of the wisdom of experience and observation so unpretentiously offered. No one will rise from the reading of this book without having gained, as the sum of its effect upon him, a somewhat more realistic and at the same time a somewhat more wisely tolerant attitude toward the great American game of politics. The world we live in is to be neither idealized nor scorned: the art most to be desired is the art of living without either craving unduly the illusions this world presents or trying to get along altogether without them. This art Mr. Clark seems to have mastered, and while not exactly a historian or a philosopher, he proves himself a wise man.

Mr. Clark's anecdotes, of which he has an unlimited supply, are for the most part as much his own as were those of Mark Twain or of Lincoln: stories of Kentucky feuds, of the "seamy side of life" as revealed to him in the course of his work as a prosecuting attorney, tales of odd characters from humble walks of life, of "half-forgotten

statesmen," or of still remembered personages. To select and relate a few of these stories would be but to misrepresent the whole. The two volumes of the autobiography are a perfect storehouse of human lore; it is remarkable how many practical lessons may be enforced by anecdotes taken from its pages. Yet Mr. Clark is not one of those who "talk too wise."

In portraiture of personalities, the author displays no extraordinary penetration; but he is quite free from the ambition of "drawing up antithetical characters of great men," and he shows a sense of proportion, a moderation and sagacity in distinguishing the primary qualities, that give weight and interest to his characterizations. It seems a true instinct that caused him to place at the head of one chapter the sentence: "One of the finest gentlemen that ever occupied the White House was William Howard Taft." His account of Roosevelt is not the usual panegyric; it is upon the whole something more worthy. Occasionally there are oddly illuminating statements in these sketches. To many, perhaps, Roosevelt's description of Robert E. Lee as "the very greatest of all the great captains that the English speaking peoples have brought forth," has seemed to be merely the result of one of those spontaneous eulogistic impulses which it is generally safe to indulge. Mr. Clark, however, after quoting from Roosevelt's *Life of Thomas Hart Benton* the sentence in which this generous phrase occurs, deposes as follows: "That is not only one of the finest sentences he ever wrote, considered entirely from a literary standpoint, but one of the most courageous considered from a political point of view." And after reading Mr. Clark's explanation of the matter, one is fain to agree. Of much interest, too, and remarkable for impartial and measured statement is his account of the McKinley-Hanna-Sherman imbroglio, with its incidental portraiture of the men. Thomas Brackett Reed, that "masterful great man," is drawn with sympathy and apparently with great fidelity.

Mr. Clark's "close-ups" are memorable; they show their subjects not posed, but in their natural attitudes and with their natural expressions. So in his observations about the House of Representatives in general, the author is concrete, and his generalizations are obviously related to facts. "First and last," he says, "there have sat in the House six humorists of the first order: Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Corwin, Samuel Sullivan Cox, James Proctor Knott, 'Private' John Allen, and Frank Cushman of Washington." Perhaps none of these men deserves to be classed with Lincoln as a humorist, and it is perhaps an open question whether Lincoln deserves to be classed with some of them from any point of view. But if the list seems a quaint one, it leads to such an assemblage of interesting material as few men aside from Mr. Clark could present. It is one of the virtues of this book that it gives the good with the bad, the rough with the fine, not without discrimination but without prejudice. Of the House as a whole, one gets an impression of dignity and efficiency. "When you first look over a new House," said Speaker Crisp, whom Mr. Clark quotes with approval, "you wonder how half of them got there; but after you come to know the members well you will find that, barring a few accidental members, they are strong in specialties." There is plenty

of wit and humor in the House, there is brilliancy and force, and occasionally there is a certain want of amenity—of which Mr. Clark does not spare to tell us. There is, for example, the case of the representative who, being interrupted in a furious tariff speech by a question as to whether the first reaper was not invented during the Walker Free Trade Tariff by Cyrus McCormick, a Virginian—a question which, as it happened, he could not answer without ruining the effect of his speech—bawled out: “Well, isn’t that richness? What do you know about it anyway?” There was no malice in the matter: the author of this sally and Clark, its victim, afterward became good friends. But amenity! Doubtless, in more ways than one, the House is human.

If much of what Mr. Clark tells us is interesting and important chiefly as affording insight into the hurlyburly of politics and its human reactions, if much is simply anecdote (of the kind that tickles the ribs and sobers the understanding), there is not a little that is significant historically. Mr. Clark is a bold commentator when he chooses. “If Lovell H. Rousseau,” he writes, “had never recruited his Louisville legion, if old Frank Wolford and Thomas E. Bramlett had never established Camp Dick Robinson, Kentucky would have seceded and the Ohio River would have been an impassable barrier to the invading armies. If Frank Blair had never captured Camp Jackson—for it was Blair who conceived and carried out that great strategic movement, and not Gen. Nathaniel Lyon of New England, as the Northern history books say—Missouri would have joined the Confederacy under the lead of Gov. Claiborne F. Jackson and Gen. Sterling Price, the peerless soldier, and with her vast resources to command, Lee’s soldiers would not have been starved and frozen into a surrender. . . . When Abraham Lincoln said in his first inaugural address: ‘I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists, he did more for the preservation of the Union than was done by all the speeches, great and small, delivered since the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel.’ Even Bostonians of the old school may be tickled by the author’s comment upon another heroic exploit: “If this had happened in New England, I suppose that the world would not be able to contain the books that would have been written about it.”

The great split in the Republican Party, which was consummated at the Chicago convention of 1912, had its inception in the Rules Revolution in the House, which began in 1908 and achieved success on March 19, 1910. Since Clark, as minority leader, conducted the attack, his account of the ins and outs of the fight, its tactics and its motives, is of prime interest, even apart from the claim which the victory gave him upon the Democratic nomination in 1912. Whatever may be thought of the justice of this claim—and it is certainly just according to the ethics of party politics—no fair-minded person can read without sympathy Mr. Clark’s account of the Baltimore Convention. “Bryan’s malicious slanders did it. . . . Bryan’s animus against me at Baltimore grew out of two facts. First, he could not pull me around by the nose in my conduct as Speaker. Second, his ambition to be nominated himself.” Such is the substance of the charge, and the details seem

adequate. The narrative at this point is outspoken, but its tone is never peevish. Indeed it is remarkable how little of the bitterness of controversy or the roughness of saw-edged sarcasm there is in any part of Mr. Clark's book. The most telling sentence in the whole work occurs not in the story of the convention, but at the end of the last chapter, where, in relation to a newspaper story that he had gone to Trenton to fight Bryan's appointment to the Cabinet, he writes: "The man who wrote that did not have sense enough to know that the Speakership of the House of Representatives is a much bigger place than is any Cabinet position, and he was not well enough acquainted with me to know that I would not accept all ten Cabinet portfolios rolled into one, for I would not be a clerk for any man."

It is not too much to say that many a man who heaved a sigh of relief when Mr. Clark lost the Democratic Presidential nomination in Baltimore would have been glad to vote for him if he could have known the Clark self-portrayed and self-expressed in these volumes.

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE PEACE CONFERENCE. By Edward J. Dillon. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Most books upon international politics, upon treaties and diplomatic negotiations, are, like the books of war correspondents, confusing to the general reader. The carefully guarded generalities, the multifarious details, the epigrammatic comments, taken altogether are frequently less than illuminating. Dr. Dillon's book is based upon better and fuller information and is more lucid in statement than are most works of the kind. If its somewhat journalistic and semi-methodical treatment of topics seems designed rather to influence than to instruct opinion, one has to remember that such subject-matter as the author has to deal with scarcely admits of so simple and clear-cut a presentation as was seen, for example, in Mr. James M. Beck's *The Evidence in the Case*; for historic perspective, we must wait. But by virtue of his inside knowledge, his ruthless uncovering of weaknesses, his keenness in criticism, he well deserves to be called the Junius of the Peace Conference.

The plenipotentiaries who at Paris shaped, or attempted to shape, the destinies of Europe seem to have been curiously unfitted for the task. Each was obsessed by his own political problems. "M. Clemenceau made France the hub of the universe. Mr. Lloyd George harbored schemes which naturally identified the welfare of mankind with the hegemony of the English-speaking races. Signor Orlando was inspired by the 'sacred egotism' which had actuated all Italian Cabinets since Italy entered the war. President Wilson was burning to associate his name and also that of his country with the vastest and noblest enterprise inscribed in the annals of history." They were ignorant of the conditions surrounding the problems they attempted to solve. "The President and the Premiers, though specialists in nothing, had to act as specialists in everything." They had little recourse to men possessed of special information. Commissions were appointed to investigate and report upon special problems, and then their reports were either ignored or rejected. The heads of the